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The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

No. 292. JANUARY, 1931.

TRUTH—LIBERTY—RELIGION.

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."—Romans xii.: 18.

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EDITORIAL NOTES.

To all our readers we extend our best wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

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The Committee in charge of the Dr. Henry Montgomery Memorial will shortly issue an appeal for subscriptions, and it is hoped that a generous and prompt response will be given to it by the members of our congregations.

* * *

The League of Nations has completed 10 years of its history, and an account of its work has been summarized in "Ten Years' Life of the League of Nations." The book has been greatly praised as a beautiful production. Without making little of the value of the League to the world, there are only comparatively few nations represented on it. In South America, Brazil and the Argentine have stepped out of it, the feeling being that the League is more concerned with Europe. But it is a good thing to have the League in existence, and our earnest hope is that in the years to come all the nations of the world may be gathered into it.

* * *

Dr. Holmes, of Second Congregational Unitarian Church, New York City, has founded an "All Nations' Fellowship," which shows good prospect of success. He had a ceremony at which from a central lighted candle on the altar, thirty-three representatives of various nationalities in his Church, each lighted a candle. The names of the Nations were in gold letters on the wall above. His weekly magazine, "Unity," is largely devoted to this activity.

* * *

In the report of the Installation at Cairncastle, which appeared in the December issue, we regret that the name of Rev. J. M'Cleery, who gave the installation prayer, was omitted.

* * *

Will new subscribers kindly enrol their names at earliest moment.

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The Treasurer reports, with thanks, the receipt of £1 from Mrs. E. Thompson to the Subsidy Fund. Further donations are earnestly solicited.

THE ETERNAL NOW.

(By Ullin).

A Happy New Year! Our Irish congregations have links with all the world. Our ministers think of younger members of their flocks who have gone out into the world, far and wide, who are making their careers in many a centre, but with whom the memory of the old country abides, and backwards and forwards flash the good wishes of the season. To some the years are passing rapidly with their experiences, and what a few years ago seemed of so much importance, a crisis in life, a complete revolution of ideas and surroundings, is now little more than a dream, and we begin to realise the illusion of Time.

There is the well-known illustration used, of imagining that by some means the law of gravity could be suspended, and if it were possible for one of us to remain at an elevation in space while the world beneath him turned round in its daily motion. Within an hour a thousand miles would have passed beneath him (from the standpoint of a spectator on the earth's surface, the one in mid-air would have travelled westward a thousand miles, keeping pace with the "journey of the sun"). The sun's dial would mean nothing to him; he would have escaped Time.

The present—what is it? What is that we call "Now?" Just the very narrow gateway between the Past and the Future. Press through that narrow gateway, send the rocket of your thought from the "now" of Time into the Eternal Now. "Now" is the accepted time, "now" is the day of salvation"—salvation from illusion, into Life, into Reality. In the Eternal Now all is gathered up into the Divine Unity; it is only in turning thought outwards that you find the triplicity in manifestation. In the Reality, Life is One; past, present and future are one. Never mind argument. "Gaze up into heaven" like the disciples of old, and in consciousness thither ascend. Life is to be known; God is to be known. Unite the terms of time with the Eternal, and to the action of the present moment you have harnessed a battery of enormous power—"the power of the endless life." You have linked your life to Life, your will to the Divine Will. You are in time, but you are also in eternity. It is not you who is acting, it is God; it is the One Life finding expression. This, then, means freedom, freedom from anxiety. Your concern is only with the action, not with its results. The Great Worker will see to those. It means happiness. The very nature of the Life is Joy, "not knowing sorrow, of Truth the essence, of Life the Joy, in your nature eternally free." The present moment, now, has happiness in it, and so has the next and the next until the very end of the year, when it has become an Old Year.

"Go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

TIDINESS.

(By Rev. J. Dare Davies).

We were a party of Unitarians who were roaming at large recently in the Counties of Antrim and Down; in fact, we were touring round seeking out beauty spots and enjoying the general charms of the said counties and people. We were not long on the road before we began to doubt all the talk we hear about depression, for everywhere, on hill and dale, holdings looked bright, prosperous, clean and tidy; farm houses were a joy for ever in their fresh coat of limewash, which in effect was heightened by a "brave taste" of old oxide on doors and gates. There was a tidiness about the well-cultivated fields and fields given over to grazing, which were free from weeds; the grass fresh and green, and the hedges were well trimmed and in excellent order. Labourers' cottages were well kept, many of them were hidden behind banks of flowers, and most of the dwellings along the main streets of small towns had their well-groomed lawns, well-weeded gardens, bowers in profusion, and not the least conspicuous was the Orange Lily.

Foreign slanderers have the habit of calling us "dirty" Irish. Well, the epithet can be returned to the same gentleman with the request to look nearer home. As we went our way we gave ourselves the pleasure of visiting some of our Meeting-Houses. We were delighted with some, and disappointed with a few. It seems strange that as a general rule small congregations keep their Meeting-Houses and graveyards in better order than large congregations; in fact, that was our experience. For example, after a round of sight-seeing in a well-known seaside resort we sought the calm and holy air of our sanctuary there, which lies in the rear and above the town, and a lovely retreat we found it to be. The grey old Meeting-House was well preserved and beautifully kept; the graves and vacant spaces in the graveyard were well carpeted with short grass, and around stood the sheltering trees. There was no sign of neglect or weeds anywhere, all of whcih made a perfect picture and well worth a visit. And here worships one of our smallest

congregations. It must be admitted that here the members are alive to their responsibilities, and they show that they do love their venerable house of prayer.

Now, let me give you a different instance. In due course we came to a place where a large congregation worshipped—that is judging by the length of the stipend list. Here was a large Meeting-House which appeared as if no one looked after it and in great need of attention; the graveyard was a howling wilderness, the paths were overgrown, and noxious weeds were everywhere, etc., etc. I could give you some more instances which would go to show you that small congregations are better caretakers of their property than large congregations. Why should this be so? Since the members of our congregations in the two counties are for the most part farmers and are able to show such love, care and energy in keeping their homes and farms in such fine order, I am convinced they are capable of exercising the same noble gifts in keeping their houses of worship in good order, and I am sure they would gladly do so if they had a lead, and that is for their Church Committees to give them. No farmer would grudge giving one day a year, and where there are so many members the Committees could get all the assistance they require to remove weeds, clean paths, cut grass, trim hedges, repair boundary walls, and also do many things for the preservation of the fabric and the good appearance of their Meeting-Houses and other buildings which they are responsible for, and work of this kind does not necessarily call for expert tradesmen. By proper organisation of such assistance during slack periods they could keep their property in good order all the time. Such labour of love would save Church funds and keep back the evil days of costly renovations and bazaars, and also would enliven congregations by bringing members closer together in fellowship and common work, and make them feel proud of their spiritual homes.

The similitude of superstition to religion makes it the more deformed.

"IN THE MELTING POT."

—:o:—

Belfast Clergyman's Views On Religion.

"Spineless Tolerance."

The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland and Unitarian and Free Christian Laymen's League held a United service in the Ulster Hall, Belfast, recently, when the Moderator of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Rev. John Barron, presided.

Rev. Sydney P. Whitehouse (Belfast), who spoke on "Religion in the Melting Pot," said that never before in its long history had the Christian theological system been in such an unenviable and uncomfortable position as that in which it found itself to-day.

It was, he urged, useless to say that the Christian religion had not failed because it has never been tried. When Bishop Gore made that statement a few years ago, Mr. Graham-Wallace made the very effective reply that a religion that has been adopted by the great States of the world for fifteen centuries, and had never been tried, was a religion that had certainly failed.

There was abroad to-day, as never before in the history of Christianity, he said, a spineless and insipid habit of mind calling itself "religious tolerance," which professed to regard each of the hundreds of Christian sects as representing one aspect of the same truth. Admittedly truth had many sides, but it had not many contradictions.

The fundamentalist view of the Bible as an infallible book and the Liberal Christian view of the Bible as a book that was not infallible, could not possibly be two equally valid aspects of the same truth. "The bread and wine either does, or does not, change into something else. God's revelation to man either is, or is not, a continuous process," Mr. Whitehouse added.

Truth did not contradict itself in that way, and all the religious tolerance in the world could not make it contradict itself in this way. There might be many ways to heaven, but the ways could not run for ever in opposite directions and yet meet.

Christ was the incarnation of tolerance, but He did not regard the Pharisee s religion as being as true as His own. Christ would have been much more popular if He had, with so-called religious tolerance, admitted the validity of "each religious sect with which He came into contact, but He would not purchase popularity at that priee. He preferred to preach what He considered to be true, and He had to suffer for it.

Religion and Science.

Rev. E. Savell Hicks, M.A., speaking on "Religion re-shaped," said that Jesus was put to death on the excuse of blasphemy and heresy—excuses that had been brought against many leaders of thought since. Even Protestantism did not learn the lesson, and when it became strong enough, it, in turn, became a persecutor. But thought had worked on the inspiring stone of progress in the past, and would, the speaker said, do so in the future.

Alluding to the march of science, Mr. Hicks said that modern science had "flung wide open the door of knowledge, of the grandeur and the beauty of the eternal plan of the glorious universe, such as the soul of man had never glimpsed before."

Religion, the speaker said, was endeavouring to ignore science, but religion was at least half a century behind the times. They were, he said, trying to run the year 1930 on the religions of the middle ages. Would anyone, he asked, try to run a business on principles of half a century or more behind the times? How, he inquired, could religion keep a hold on the world and the people in it if it remained stagnant in a moving world?

Cheap tolerance, Mr. Hicks described as "only thinly-disguised religious indifference. They, as Unitarians, claimed that the flowing tide of thought was with them." Creeds were crumbling and changing, and wearing out of date, but man's soul was eternally young. The religion that was to be born anew must be a religion of common sense, and must rule out childish thoughts of God as it would rule out brutal thoughts of God.

Such a religion, the preacher declared, would welcome every new thought and every new discovery as part of the eternal truth, and, above all, it would be practical. Such a religion would not be one of high days and festivals, but a loving, active Gospel of every-day life, making man feel that he was living a part of his eternal life here and now.

The liberal view was a practical Gospel for practical men and women in a practical world.

CHURCHES AND SWEEPSTAKES.

Protest Against London Hospital Governor's Proposal.

The Executive Committee of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, which met in London recently, discussed the proposal to raise money for hospitals by lotteries, and unanimously passed the following resolution:—

"That in view of the alarming and deplorable proposal recently advocated by Sir Gordon Campbell, a governor of St. Bartholomew's Hospital and chairman of the Appeal Committee, that sweepstakes should be organised partly to benefit our hospitals, this National Council of Evangelical Free Churches strongly urges our hospital authorities to resist such insidious methods of support, and appeals to the Churches and allied societies to safeguard young people from these pernicious allurements by refusing to countenance the holding of lotteries and raffles and similar incentives to gambling, and, further, to encourage increased generous and loyal support of our hospitals and all kindred beneficent institutions."

BELFAST WOMAN MINISTER.

Mrs. R. T. Martin Licensed by Glasgow Presbytery (Continuing).

Mrs. R. T. Martin, M.Sc., Belfast, has been licensed to preach by the Glasgow Presbytery of the United Free Church (Continuing). The licence was agreed to in June last by the General Assembly of the Continuing Church.

At the ceremony in Glasgow testimony was borne to Mrs. Martin's satisfactory credentials and honourable record, both in University and in the Theological College, and the Presbytery dispensed with further proofs and proceeded to admit her as a minister. Rev. J. G. Clark, Moderator, read the customary questions.

Mrs. Martin will remain in Belfast until she receives a call to preach. In an interview she said she saw no reason why women should not be ministers, and if she had not felt absolutely right about it should would not have become one, though she never dreamt of it till quite recently.

"I expect circumstances were possible then," she added. "I had time to study for my degree. My husband is dead, and my family grown up. If they had been young and he had been alive, well, I couldn't have done it. I would naturally have had to look after them."

LEAGUE OF YOUTH.

The first meeting was held in Belfast on Saturday at 3.30 p.m.

Thirty-two were present, representing ten Churches.

It was unanimously decided to start a League of Youth in our Church. Another meeting will be held on January 31st to arrange details. In the meantime all are invited to send ideas to the Convenor to be discussed that day—and it is hoped the Churches not yet represented will send delegates.

P. GODDING (Convenor).

REPORTS.

Belfast First Church.—The Rosemary Dramatic Society, which is now in the second session of its career, presented three plays in the Central Hall on December 10th in aid of the Sunday School work. The Seniors gave "The Were-Wolf," by Lady Alix Egerton, and "The Grand Chain's Diamond," by Allan Monkhouse, while the Juniors gave "The Fairy Ring," a short piece by J. Wallace, jun. It was an ambitious undertaking, representing a distinct advance in standard on the previous session. "The Were-Wolf" is a sort of modern mystery play, in which various ideals and types of character are represented, and in the end the fearless little soul triumphs over the Were-Wolf, a sinister power representing Fear, who is defeated and banished from life, to the deliverance of the other characters who had yielded to his domination. The piece calls for imagination and elocution, and was very creditably carried through by the members of the caste, the chief part, that of Labour, being especially well sustained by Miss E. Browne.

"The Grand Chain's Diamond" is a one-act comedy of life in a working-class home, where the dull routine is suddenly broken when the large diamond is mysteriously thrown in at the window, and offers the bored Mrs. Perkins "the chance of a lifetime," and the opportunity of realising the faded dreams in her heart, but thoroughly upsetting Mr. Perkins and Miss Perkins, who have no imagination. This gives rise to very comical situations, which the audience hugely enjoyed.

It was evident that a lot of work had been put into the training of the juniors, some of whom were quite young children, in the fairy story of the Ring, which was very well received by the audience, which filled the hall, as were also the dramatic efforts of the Seniors, and in that they have their reward. Special mention should be made of those who took the leading parts: Miss E. Browne, Miss Eileen M'Cafferty as Mrs. Perkins, and Mr. Andrew M'Neill as Mr. Perkins, all did excellently; and of the indefatigable labours, in organisation and rehearsals, of Mr. Robert Harkness, Mr. A. M'Neill, and Miss Nan Newman, as also of the assistance of Mrs. Newman in the matter of dress and piano accompaniment in the Fairy Ring.

Belfast First Church.—The rendering of selections from the Messiah by the organist and choir, augmented for the occasion, is an annual event, and there was a large attendance on the evening of Sunday, December 14th, at the service. The Minister, in a brief address, emphasised the function of the choir in church worship from week to week, and also in such occasional renderings of the masterpieces of sacred music which enabled the people to enter into the splendour of great Christmas themes with something of the emotion which thrilled through spirits of larger wing and loftier inspiration. Such music could be the vehicle of a fresh quickening of the vision and experience of the soul and a real ministry. It could take us into the depths, and lift us to the heights of the Christian religion through the Message of Promise, Suffering and Triumph.

The varied and moving appeal of Handel's music was again made a living and felt power, rendered in the spirit of worship, and in the sacred atmosphere of the Church. The soloists were Miss Adelaide Beattie, soprano; Miss L. V. Gordon, L.R.A.M., contralto; Mr. T. Corlett, tenor, and Mr. J. A. Laird, baritone, with Mr. Albert Taylor, L.R.A.M., A.R.C.M., at the organ.

Larne and Kilwaughter.—On Sunday afternoon, 14th December, a Christmas Cantata, entitled "The Holy Morn," was rendered in the above Church. An augmented choir of over 40 voices united, under the able leadership of our organist, Miss K. Browne, to contribute a festival of song that will be long remembered here for its excellence of quality and variety of appeal. Great praise is due to Miss Browne in the training of the choir. The Cantata, in addition to providing plenty of scope for chorus work, contained solos, duets and quartettes, each of which in turn was rendered with fine feeling and accuracy. The soloists were: Mrs. Moore, A.L.C.M., of Ballyclare, Mrs. Drummond, of Larne; Mr. J. A. Laird, of Belfast, and Mr. J. Burton, of Larne. To these, as to all those who helped to make the production of the Cantata the undoubted success it was, we owe a deep debt of gratitude, and gladly record our appreciation.

The Church was filled beyond seating capacity, and chairs had to be brought into the aisles, which seemed to us a token of the interest taken in such music, and brought encouragement and inspiration both to ourselves and to the organist and members of the choir.

Mountpottinger.—A Sale of Work and Cake Fair, which had been organised by the Women's League, was held on Friday, 12th December. The opening ceremony was performed by W. J. Baxter, Esq., B.A., who expressed the pleasure it gave him to come and assist Mountpottinger in their effort to augment the Church funds, and referred to the work of the Women's League in our Unitarian Churches. Mr. Baxter's kind remarks were most encouraging to all League members present. Rev. J. H. Ewbank, B.A., B.D., occupied the chair, and after welcoming Mr. Baxter to Mountpottinger, spoke of the recent successful effort made by the congregation with regard to the electric light installation—the necessary funds were in hand before the work was commenced. Mr. Harold Thomas, on behalf of the Congregation and Women's League, expressed our gratitude to Mr. Baxter for devoting so much of his valuable time to us on this occasion. The financial result of the Sale was beyond expectations, considering the depressed state of trade. We feel we have been most successful, and wish to embrace this opportunity of sincerely thanking all kind friends who so generously helped and encouraged us by their presence. When the balance sheet is completed it will show about £83 to our credit.

Holywood. — The annual business meeting of the First Presbyterian (Non-Subscribing) Congregation was held on Sunday, December 14th. Reverting to an old custom, the meeting was held in the Church after morning service, and perhaps in consequence of this arrangement there was a larger attendance of members than for many years. Mr. W. Patterson presided, and briefly reviewed the congregation's position, as disclosed in the Committee's report and financial statement. The accounts showed a small credit balance. On the motion of the Chairman, seconded by the Hon. Treasurer (Mr. F. A. Robinson), the Committee's report and state-

ment of accounts were unanimously adopted. On the motion of Mr. W. K. Graham, seconded by Mr. C. C. Greenfield, Mr. Robinson was re-elected as treasurer; Mr. James Shannon as hon. secretary, and the following were added to the Committee in place of those retiring by rotation:—Miss R. Praeger, Messrs. Robert Steel, James Meneely, and J. M'Elvey. Mr. F. A. Robinson was re-elected as the congregation's representative on the Board of Governors of the Upper Sullivan School, on the motion of Mr. James Shannon, jun., seconded by Mr. W. J. Harney. Votes of thanks were accorded to the Chairman and members of the Church Choir.

A very successful meeting of the local branch of the Women's League was held on Monday, December 8th, when Mrs W. A. Gardiner gave a very good travel talk called "Life on a Rhodesian Farm." The talk included very interesting descriptions of visits to Cairo, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem, as well as a picture of agricultural life in South Africa, where Mrs. Gardiner's son, Mr. Jack Gardiner (an old Irish Rugby International) now lives. There was a record attendance of members, and the talk and many interesting photographs were greatly enjoyed by all. At the January meeting Miss S. R. Praeger is to give readings.

Belfast Domestic Mission.—The Mission was a hive of activity during the Christmas season of 1930. On Wednesday, December 17th, the Scouts and Cubs entertained 30 poor children, each member bringing one poor child and enough food for himself and his guest. On Thursday, December 18th, the members of the Mission gathered for a congregational social, Miss F. Newman, L.R.A.M., being in the chair. A programme of music and dancing was enjoyed, and during the evening a presentation was made by Mr. Rodgers to the Missionary of a gold wristlet watch and a tobacco pouch as a token of esteem from the members present. On Saturday, Dec. 20th, the Sunday School scholars had their annual party and Xmas tree, with prize distribution and gifts of toys and games. Later in the evening the members of the choir and their friends met for social intercourse. On Monday afternoon the All Souls' Branch of the Women's League entertained the Stanhope Street Branch to tea, and parcels from the Needlework Guild were distributed to 30 members. Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Hay, Miss Erskine and Miss N. Kane contributed to the programme, and during the proceedings members were gratified to welcome Miss Bruce and Miss Hutton. On Monday evening over 80 members of the Junior Branches of the Social Service Girls' Club enjoyed Xmas fare and games, Miss Montgomery being ably supported by her helpers—Miss Quinn, Miss Millar and others. Tuesday evening saw the Senior Club members gathered for Xmas celebrations, when the fun and fare were of the best. Mr. J. M'Cleery supplied the pulpit on Sunday, Dec. 28th, the Missionary taking a well-earned rest after his recent attack of malaria. The Secretary, Mrs. E. R. Jackson, wishes to thank all those who contributed in money or kind to the Needlework Guild and to the extra relief fund, and trusts that this method of acknowledging the gifts will be accepted by the generous donors.

CAPTIVE HARE COURSING.

—:o:—

In response to an urgent telegram, the Moderator formed one of an important deputation organised by the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, at the Home Office on Wednesday, December 3rd. Sir Dawson Bates, the Home Secretary, expressed his sympathy with the object of the deputation. The Primate of All-Ireland, the Archbishop of Armagh, made it clear that they were concentrating upon the form of coursing where captive hares were in an enclosed space, making it impossible for any escape for the majority of them, and that they were ruthlessly torn to pieces. This was not sport. Personally he himself supported sport, but this form of cruelty ought not to be tolerated. The leaders of the various denominations and an influential body of ladies and gentlemen from various parts of Northern Ireland were in the deputation, which was thoroughly unanimous. Legislation to abolish captive hare coursing was asked for.

FOR THE CHILDREN.

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. Prov. 25, v. 11.

The New Year begins a new campaign, and there is sure to be hard things to do, disappointments to bear, and temptations to meet. These difficulties test our powers and try our characters, making us sturdier people than we would be if we had everything made easy for us.

So if, in this New Year, we have to battle with the hard grey weather, or anything else, let us go into the fight with a bold and hopeful spirit.

And, above all, boys and girls, I want you to watch your words. Remember, you can never catch the word that has once gone out of your lips, though you chase after it as on the wings of the wind. Once spoken, it is out of your reach. Do your best, you can never recall it. Therefore, take care what you say. Never speak an unkind word, an impure word, a lying word, or a profane word. Remember the text at the head of this column, and see that your words are like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

Here is a little poem for you to learn.

WATCH YOUR WORDS.

Keep a watch on your words, my darlings,
For words are wonderful things;
They are sweet like bees' fresh honey—
Like the bees they have terrible stings;
They can bless like the warm glad sunshine,
And brighten a lonely life;
They can cut in the strife of anger,
Like an open, two-edged knife.

Let them pass through your lips unchallenged,
If their errand is true and kind—
If they come to support the weary,
To comfort and help the blind:
If a bitter revengeful spirit
Prompt the words, let them be unsaid;
They may flash through a brain like lightning
Or fall on a heart like lead.

Keep them back if they're cold and cruel,
Under bar, and lock, and seal;
The wounds they make, my darlings,
Are always slow to heal.
May peace guard your lives and ever,
From the time of your early youth,
May the words that you daily utter
Be the words of beautiful truth.

—Selected.

Here are the answers to the Puzzles given in the December Number.

1—A "Woffler" is a man who repairs scales and weighing machines.

2—Famous Irishman: Napper Tandy. Song, "Wearing o' the Green."

3—Famous Irishman Robert Emmet. Song, "She is Far From the Land."

A Happy New Year to all. L. S.

OBITUARY.

MRS. THOS. HAY, KILLINCHY.

Members of this congregation received intelligence with much sorrow that on November 7th Mrs. Mary Hay, wife of Mr. Thomas Hay, Clea, Toy—a faithful elder of the Church—had passed away. Until within about a fortnight of her death, Mrs. Hay had been in comparatively good health, and in her 69th year, was looking forward to years of usefulness, but was suddenly struck down with little warning in the midst of a busy career. It may be said of her with more than usual truth that "she opened her mouth with wisdom, and the law of kindness was in her tongue. She looked well to her household, and eat not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." She leaves behind an aged husband at the age of over 80 years to mourn her loss, and three sons and three daughters, with whom the Church Committee passed a resolution of sympathy in their bereavement, which was conveyed to them. The funeral to the New Meeting House Green, Killinchy, was on Sunday, November 9th, in the presence of a large concourse of relatives and numerous acquaintances from near and far, the Rev. D. J. Williams officiating on the occasion.

MARRIAGE.

MINNIS—MORROW—December 23rd, at the Unitarian Church, Greyabbey, by the Rev. W. H. Townley Tilson, M.A., Richard, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. James Wallace Minnis, Ballynockan, Co. Down, to Lily Kathleen, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. James Morrow, The Cairn, Larne.

CHURCH FINANCE.

The late Minister of Carncastle, Mr. Thompson, at the last Synod meetings (1930) moved a long resolution on Church finance, which deserved far more than the amused acceptance it got from the meeting. The main object was to persuade young members of a family, not at present subscribing, to take out paying membership at a convenient sum in their own right. Also to devise some means of automatically persuading (though it should rather be a pleasant duty) every man (why not women, too?) on marrying to begin paying subscription or stipend, if not already doing so.

Church officers, secretary, treasurer, and committee men are strangely loth to interfere with what is already the method. This, I say, both from my own limited experience, and from the experience of my brother ministers — and I do not understand it. Young people of twenty or thereabouts, earning their own wages, put their penny in the plate and wash their hands of the whole church business until the next Sunday they attend. I do not exaggerate when I say that some children have pocket-money enough to make a small subscription from, but because it is given without a word (sometimes without even the example) to suggest wise spending, they merely fritter it away and are no better off for having had money. Further, in this country the vicious system prevails in farming families of keeping young fellows and girls (with, no doubt, notable exceptions) well into their thirties without definite payment of wages. They get their keep and pocket-money. Pocket-money may be as much as the minister's stipend in some places, but it is not wages for work done. To urge that these young folk should become subscribing members of their Church is to draw upon oneself the indignation of the father, as he wants to know how he is going to pay more than he is doing—it never seems to dawn on him that they should and can pay their own. This system makes the sons and daughters little better than labourers—far better off materially, but, as far as independence of spirit and character goes, no different. It is interesting and instructive to note that the Free State Statistical Bureau blames this system more than anything else for the disproportionately late marriages of sons and daughters of farmers—if they marry at all.

The Church can help to improve matters. It is not easy to get the system of Church payments changed, but once we can show the permanent members of a congregation the benefits of change, then things will move. Is it not to the benefit of all that as many as possible should pay something, rather than that a few should pay heavily? I can say frankly that twopence a week promised definitely and paid regularly would not be sniffed at in Crumlin. Would it not make the job easier of finding new stipend-payers to make up losses by deaths and removals? Would it not make for a better spirit in the Church, of co-operation, keener interest and attendance, whereas many as possible paid their few shillings and took a share in the upkeep of the place? Is it not nicer to have fifty members paying on an average one pound a year than twenty paying two pounds ten (£50 at £1 equals 20 at £2 10s). It would solve the difficulty of finding enough keenly interested people to become committee, because they should be stipend-payers. In any case, if you have money in a concern, or are pledged to support it with money, you will take good care to see that your money is not wasted, is made good use of, and returns its value. This ought to appeal to Ulster folk.

Candidly, if we ministers who know these things and suffer from them yet make no effort for the better, deserve the apathy and failure of our congregations—as some of us have it at present undeservedly. We deserve also the reproaches of that same congregation for not giving them a chance.

Won't Synod please seriously take up this business? Combine it with a solid campaign on the Moderator's suggestion for Sustentation improvements? Seriously, I suggest that a campaign be started in memory of Mr. Thompson. It ought to appeal to the imaginaion of lay people as well as ministers; and, by using as a lever the respect he was held in, and the fact of being a memorial, might get a better chance.

G. PRICE-JONES.

— **The Unitarian and** —

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